

President's reply.—This representation will also receive consideration in connection with the Bill to amend the Jenmi-Kudiyar Regulation.

17. Certain needs of the Cardamom planters.

Mr. U. M. S. Mohidin Pillai Rowther (Member, Devicolum taluk) spoke about certain needs of the cardamom planters. He said at the outset that the cardamom ryots of the High Ranges were experiencing great hardship on account of some of the recent orders of the Government affecting them. Those hardships were aggravated by the apathy of the departmental officers who were responsible for carrying out the orders of the Government. They only looked to the interests of their respective departments and not to the welfare of the ryots. Those orders, he said, were quite against the spirit underlying the Cardamom Rules dated the 28th Karkatakam, 1080, passed during the time of Dewan Mr. V. P. Madhava Rao, C. I. E. The Rules provided for the assignment of cardamom lands on easy terms. Attracted by these Rules and certain concessions held out to the ryots such as allowing them to gather twigs and thatching grass and to quarry stones free of charge for purposes of constructing buildings, many people rushed in for cardamom lands and were pursuing that industry well, encouraged by the sympathetic attitude of the local officers. In accordance with the Rules of 1080, many people had put in applications for lands and entered on them and effected improvements thereon at much cost and labour. Before the lands could be registered, the Government by an order passed in 1096 absolutely prohibited further registry of lands within the Cardamom Hills Reserves. Taking advantage of this order, the Revenue subordinates began to mercilessly enforce the provisions of the Land Conservancy Regulation against the applicants. Although the Government had subsequently modified the order to the extent of registering occupied lands improved upon by *bona fide* occupants, the Revenue subordinates without making adequate enquiries were taking steps under the above Regulation much to the detriment of the occupants.

The Member next said that, under the Cardamom Rules, any person who cut down trees of four feet in girth and above without permission was liable to pay double seigniorage on the trees felled. The officers of the Forest Department were strictly enforcing this provision obviously to increase the forest revenue, but in no case did they make local inspection and enquire into further details such as the necessity for cutting down the trees. The Member said that the enforcement of this provision caused great hardship to the ryots. The trees on the cardamom gardens were not a source of revenue to the Government and they had not hitherto received a cash by their disposal. Such being the case, the Government would not be losers if the ryots were allowed to freely handle the reserved trees on their gardens. To remove the above hardship, he suggested that the whole cardamom area, as demarcated by Mr. A. W. L. Vernede, a former Superintendent of the Cardamom Hills, might be transferred to the control of the Revenue Department, and that such of the lands within that area as did not contain many royal trees might be assigned to *bona fide* applicants.

The Member next said that, although the Government had ordered the disafforestation of certain swampy areas within the Cardamom Hills Reserve, applicants for those lands were not forthcoming because of the stringency of the rules of the Forest Department. Many people were deterred from going in for lands in the Cardamom Hills Reserve and settling there because of the restrictions imposed on them by the several departmental orders such as levying additional grazing fees for cattle, prohibition against taking and utilising materials for the construction of buildings, prohibition against further registry of lands, prohibiting the importation of tobacco otherwise than through licensed tobaccoists, etc. He said that the orders on those points were unknown to the ryots and were passed without ascertaining their wishes. He prayed that, in future at least, orders affecting the ryots be passed after careful consideration and that arrangements be made for circulating such orders among the ryots.

The Member's next prayer was for the establishment of a Chowkey at Kutiraj-panchan and for allowing people to import tobacco into the High Ranges on payment of duty just like other dutiable articles.

In conclusion, the Member suggested that, if the Government did not see their way to sanction the above prayers immediately, a committee consisting of a Tahsildar having knowledge of local conditions and a few cardamom ryots might be appointed to consider and report on the present condition and progress of the cardamom industry.

President's reply.—As regards the establishment of a chowkey at Kutiraipanchan, Government have already addressed the Excise Commissioner. The matter is under the consideration of the Government.

As regards tobacco, the stuff can be imported into the State on payment of duty and sold only on taking out a license on payment of a fee of Rs. 5. In the absence of a restriction of this kind, tobacco revenue will suffer.

As regards the felling of trees on registered cardamom lands by the holders thereof, it is seen that the levy of double seigniorage is warranted by the rules, if trees are cut and removed without permission. In regard to the complaint of the Member that the Divisional Forest officers never inspect the localities to find out whether the removal of trees is objectionable in any case, the Conservator will be asked to issue the necessary instructions.

As regards the G. O. dated 22nd October, 1920, prohibiting the further registry of lands for cardamom cultivation within the Cardamom Hills Reserve, I may say that the policy underlying that G. O. will be re-examined.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p. m.